

# AN ANALYSIS OF PARTICIPATION IN NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL ACADEMIC CONFERENCES AMONG PERSONNEL AND STUDENTS OF THE FACULTY OF MANAGEMENT SCIENCE AT SUAN SUNANDHA RAJABHAT UNIVERSITY

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## ABSTRACT

Abstract—As academic conferences play a pivotal role in fostering scholarly exchange and professional development, understanding the patterns and dynamics of participation becomes crucial for institutions aiming to enrich their academic culture. This study delves into the landscape of conference engagement within the Faculty of Management Science at Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University, exploring the motivations, challenges, and opportunities for both personnel and students. A mixed-methods approach was employed, combining quantitative surveys with qualitative in-depth interviews and focus group discussions. Quantitative analysis revealed distinct patterns based on academic ranks and student academic years. Senior faculty members displayed heightened participation, while senior students exhibited increased engagement in their final academic years. Financial constraints emerged as a significant challenge for both groups, influencing the frequency of participation. Mentorship emerged as a crucial success factor, impacting sustained engagement. These insights contribute to the ongoing dialogue on elevating the scholarly culture within the faculty, paving the way for sustained academic growth and excellence.

Keywords— Academic Conferences, Participation, Personnel, Students

## INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary landscape of higher education, active engagement in academic conferences has become a hallmark of scholarly vitality and professional growth. These conferences serve as dynamic platforms for the exchange of knowledge, the dissemination of research findings, and the cultivation of networks crucial to advancing academic and professional pursuits. Academic conferences have evolved as essential forums where scholars, researchers, and students converge to share insights, discuss advancements, and collectively contribute to the intellectual progression of their disciplines. The tradition of attending conferences dates back centuries, but the contemporary academic conference has transformed into a multifaceted vehicle for academic exchange, presenting a diverse array of research methodologies, interdisciplinary discussions, and collaborative initiatives.

The Faculty of Management Science at Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University has established itself as a hub of academic excellence, offering programs that blend theoretical knowledge with practical application. With a commitment to producing well-rounded graduates and contributing to the academic discourse in management and related fields, the faculty plays a pivotal role in shaping the educational landscape of the university. Within the vibrant academic milieu of Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University's Faculty of Management Science, understanding the historical context and dynamics of participation in both national and international academic conferences is integral to fostering a culture of research excellence and global collaboration.

Participation in academic conferences is emblematic of a commitment to scholarly pursuits and continuous professional development. For faculty members, attending and presenting at conferences not only showcases their research contributions but also provides opportunities for networking, collaboration, and exposure to emerging trends in their respective fields. For students, conference participation offers a unique chance to engage with the broader academic community, refine presentation skills, and explore potential research interests (Nimngam & Chitraphan, 2023).

In an era marked by globalization, academic conferences transcend geographical boundaries, providing a platform for the internationalization of research and ideas. Understanding the dynamics of conference participation within the Faculty of Management Science holds significance at multiple levels. For faculty members, it can inform professional development strategies and contribute to academic networking. For students, it can offer insights into opportunities for exposure, learning, and potential avenues for future research endeavors. Additionally, the findings can guide the faculty in formulating policies and support systems that foster a culture of active and meaningful participation in academic conferences. Exposure to diverse perspectives and methodologies enriches the academic experience, fostering a global mindset among participants. For an institution

like Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University, embracing the global context of academic conferences aligns with its mission to nurture well-rounded and globally-aware professionals.

The participation of faculty members and students in national and international conferences contributes significantly to the development of a robust research culture within the Faculty of Management Science. A thriving research culture not only enhances the academic reputation of the faculty but also positions it as a hub for cutting-edge knowledge production and dissemination. By delving into the historical context, challenges, and opportunities associated with conference engagement, this study aims to inform strategies and initiatives that foster a vibrant and globally-connected scholarly community within the faculty. While the benefits of conference participation are evident, the analysis of historical trends will shed light on challenges faced by personnel and students. Identifying these challenges provides an opportunity for the faculty to implement targeted strategies and support mechanisms that mitigate barriers to participation.

## OBJECTIVES

The study aspires to contribute valuable insights that can inform strategic decision-making, optimize support structures, and ultimately elevate the academic and professional impact of national and international conference participation within the Faculty of Management Science at Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University. The objectives of the study are as follows:

1. Quantify the extent of participation in national and international academic conferences among personnel (faculty members, administrative staff) and students within the Faculty of Management Science at Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University.
2. Analyze the motivations that drive personnel and students to participate in national and international academic conferences, exploring factors such as professional development, knowledge exchange, networking, and career advancement.
3. Evaluate the criteria used by personnel and students to select specific conferences for participation, considering factors such as conference reputation, relevance to research interests, and opportunities for collaboration.

## LITERATURE REVIEWS

The scholarly exploration of academic conference participation provides valuable insights into the dynamics, motivations, and challenges faced by both faculty members and students. This literature review synthesizes research from the past two decades to establish a theoretical foundation for understanding the factors influencing participation in national and international academic conferences within the context of the Faculty of Management Science at Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University.

### *1. Motivations for Conference Participation:*

DeShields et al. (2005) explore motivational factors influencing students in higher education. Drawing on Herzberg's two-factor theory, the study identifies satisfaction and motivators that contribute to students' engagement, which can be adapted to understand motivations for participating in academic conferences. Maringe and Gibbs delve into marketing practices in higher education. Their insights into promoting academic activities align with the potential strategies that can be employed to market and encourage participation in academic conferences within the Faculty of Management Science.

### *2. Faculty Development and Professional Growth:*

Conference participation is seen as a mechanism for faculty to stay abreast of evidence-based practices and contribute to the dissemination of such practices (Austin, 2011). Evidence-based change in education emphasizes the importance of faculty engagement in scholarly activities. Trowler's (2010) literature review on student engagement extends to faculty engagement as well. Understanding the elements that engage faculty members in academic pursuits, including conference participation, is crucial for the Faculty of Management Science's goal of nurturing a vibrant academic community.

### *3. Impact of Conference Participation on Research Productivity:*

Providing insights into managing the research-teaching nexus, emphasizing the interconnectedness of research and teaching in universities (Hemmings et al., 2012). For the Faculty of Management Science, understanding how conference participation contributes to this nexus is crucial. Kyvik and Larsen's (2010) case study on national research assessment exercises explores the impact on research activities. While specific to national assessments, the findings can be extrapolated to understand how conference participation contributes to research productivity and recognition.

### *4. Challenges and Barriers to Participation:*

Understanding the challenges of gaining recognition for conference participation is critical for addressing the barriers faculty and students face touches upon the challenges of visibility and recognition (Harzing & Alakangas, 2016). Morley's (2013) work on women in higher education leadership sheds light on gender-related challenges.

While specific to leadership, the gender dimension may offer insights into potential disparities in conference participation that need to be addressed.

#### 5. Institutional Support and Policies:

Examining experts in higher education may provide insights into how to restructure institutional support to facilitate collaborative meetings between faculty and students (Whitchurch, 2013). Exploring the future of public research universities depends on the role of institutional support. Understanding institutional policies and support structures for conference participation is critical to promoting active participation (Duderstadt, 2018).

In conclusion, the literature review highlights the multidimensional factors influencing participation in academic conferences within the Faculty of Management Science at Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University. By drawing on motivational theories, understanding faculty development, recognizing the impact on research productivity, addressing challenges, and exploring institutional support structures, this literature provides a comprehensive framework for the subsequent analysis of conference participation dynamics in the specific academic context under study.

## METHODS

The study adopts a mixed-methods research design, combining both quantitative and qualitative approaches to provide a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics surrounding participation in academic conferences within the Faculty of Management Science.

#### *Sampling:*

a. Quantitative Phase: The population are the faculty members and students of the Faculty of Management Science at Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University. Sampling technique are stratified random sampling based on academic ranks for faculty members and academic years for students.

b. Qualitative Phase: The participants are the faculty members and students from the quantitative sample who exhibit diverse patterns of conference participation. The purposeful sampling was employed to capture a range of perspectives and experiences.

#### *Data Collection:*

a. Quantitative Phase: Construct surveys based on validated instruments to assess factors influencing participation, motivations, challenges, and perceived benefits. Collect academic and conference attendance records from institutional databases.

b. Qualitative Phase: Conduct semi-structured interviews with selected participants to explore individual experiences, motivations, and challenges related to conference participation. Organize focus group discussions to facilitate collective exploration of themes emerging from individual interviews.

#### *Instrumentation:*

a. Quantitative Phase: Adapt existing instruments from literature and customize them to the specific context of the Faculty of Management Science. Compile relevant data on participants' conference attendance, frequency, and types of conferences attended.

b. Qualitative Phase: Develop interview guides to ensure consistency while allowing flexibility to explore unique experiences. Create protocols outlining discussion themes to guide the focus group sessions.

#### *Data Analysis:*

a. Quantitative Phase: Descriptive statistics was used to analyze survey responses using descriptive statistics to quantify participation patterns, motivations, and challenges. Inferential statistics employ statistical tests to identify correlations between demographic factors and conference participation.

b. Qualitative Phase: Utilize thematic analysis to identify recurring themes and patterns in qualitative data from interviews and focus group discussions. Triangulate qualitative findings with quantitative data to validate and enrich the overall analysis.

By employing this mixed-methods research design, the study aims to offer a comprehensive analysis of conference participation among personnel and students at Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University's Faculty of Management Science, contributing valuable insights for the optimization of academic engagement within the institution.

## RESULTS

The integrated analysis provides a nuanced understanding of conference participation within the Faculty of Management Science. The findings, derived from both quantitative and qualitative data, offer actionable insights for optimizing engagement, fostering a supportive environment, and shaping institutional policies that encourage active participation in national and international academic conferences.

#### *Quantitative Data Analysis:*

*Demographic Overview:* Majority of participants were senior faculty members (associate professors and professors). Variations in conference attendance were observed across different departments, with some showing

higher engagement than others. Higher participation rates were evident among senior students, particularly those in their final academic years. Differences in conference participation based on major disciplines were observed.

*Conference Attendance Patterns:* Faculty members regularly attendance at national conferences was prevalent across all academic ranks, while international conference attendance varied. Senior faculty members demonstrated higher rates of international conference participation. While a significant increase in conference participation was noted during the final academic years. Variations in participation rates based on major disciplines were identified.

*Motivations and Perceived Benefits:* For faculty Members, primary motivations included networking, research dissemination, and professional development. They perceived benefits encompassed enhanced research visibility and academic recognition. While students' motivations included exposure to research trends and networking opportunities and perceived benefits highlighted skill development and potential for future research opportunities.

*Challenges and Barriers:* Financial constraints emerged as a significant barrier for both faculty members and students. Time constraints and limited institutional support were identified as additional challenges. Variations in challenges were noted based on academic ranks and student academic years.

#### *Qualitative Data Analysis:*

Narratives highlighted the impact of mentorship, institutional policies, and personal initiatives on conference participation. Personal stories enriched the understanding of motivations and challenges identified quantitatively. Qualitative narratives corroborated the prevalence of financial constraints identified in quantitative data. Participants shared personal experiences related to financial challenges hindering conference participation.

In conclusion, the findings offer insights into demographic patterns, motivations, challenges, and potential interventions, contributing to a deeper understanding of academic engagement. These results inform strategic decisions for fostering a culture of active and meaningful participation in national and international academic conferences within the faculty.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### *Conclusion*

In scrutinizing the participation dynamics in national and international academic conferences within the Faculty of Management Science at Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University, this analysis has illuminated essential facets of engagement among both personnel and students. The synthesis of quantitative and qualitative data has provided a holistic understanding, leading to key observations and recommendations for the advancement of scholarly activities within the faculty. Key observations include:

1. Demographic Trends: Senior faculty members exhibited a predominant presence in conference participation, showcasing a wealth of experience and expertise. Final-year students demonstrated an upsurge in engagement, indicating a potential correlation between academic progression and conference attendance.

2. Motivations and Benefits: Diverse motivations for participation were identified, ranging from professional networking and skill development to research dissemination and exposure to current trends. Perceived benefits encompassed increased visibility in the academic community, enhanced recognition, and the acquisition of valuable skills and knowledge.

3. Challenges Faced: Financial constraints emerged as a significant impediment to conference participation for both faculty members and students. Time constraints and the need for greater institutional support were recurrent challenges that impacted the frequency of engagement.

4. Success Factors: Mentorship emerged as a pivotal factor influencing sustained conference participation, providing guidance and support to both faculty and students. Personal initiatives, coupled with institutional backing, played a crucial role in fostering a conducive environment for active engagement.

### Recommendations

The recommendations aim to position the faculty as a dynamic hub for scholarly exchange, furthering its commitment to excellence in research and academic development. The journey toward an enriched scholarly community begins with a shared commitment to continuous improvement and a vibrant culture of engagement.

1. Financial Support Mechanisms: Introduce targeted financial support programs to alleviate the economic burden associated with conference attendance. Explore partnerships, grants, and sponsorship opportunities to facilitate broader access to national and international conferences.

2. Formalized Mentorship Programs: Establish formal mentorship programs connecting experienced faculty members with their junior counterparts and students. Foster an environment of knowledge exchange, guidance, and collaborative learning to enhance conference preparedness.

3. Policy Refinement: Review and refine institutional policies to provide clearer guidelines on financial assistance and flexibility in work schedules for conference participation. Ensure policies align with the evolving needs and aspirations of faculty members and students.

4. Cultivating Awareness and Collaboration: Increase awareness regarding the significance of conference participation through targeted communication and awareness campaigns. Encourage interdisciplinary collaboration within the faculty, fostering a sense of community and shared academic goals.

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